

Speech to 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U.

[Speech Delivered: February 24-25 1956:](#)

At the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU February 24-25 1956, Khrushchev delivered a report in which he denounced Stalin's crimes and the 'cult of personality' surrounding Stalin. This speech would ultimately trigger a world-wide split:

Extract, touching on the [History of the All-Union Communist Party \(Bolsheviks\), Short Course](#)

[Preceded by details of Beria's terrible crimes]...

Beria was unmasked by the Party's Central Committee shortly after Stalin's death. As a result of particularly detailed legal proceedings, it was established that Beria had committed monstrous crimes and Beria was shot.

The question arises why Beria, who had liquidated tens of thousands of Party and Soviet workers, was not unmasked during Stalin's life. He was not unmasked earlier because he had utilized very skilfully Stalin's weaknesses; feeding him with suspicions, he assisted Stalin in everything and acted with his support.

Comrades: The cult of the individual acquired such monstrous size chiefly because Stalin himself, using all conceivable methods, supported the glorification of his own person. This is supported by numerous facts. One of the most characteristic examples of Stalin's self-glorification and of his lack of even elementary modesty is the edition of his *Short Biography*, which was published in 1948 (sic).

This book is an expression of the most dissolute flattery, an example of making a man into a godhead, of transforming him into an infallible sage, "the greatest leader, sublime strategist of all times and nations." Finally, no other words could be found with which to lift Stalin up to the heavens.

We need not give here examples of the loathsome adulation filling this book. All we need to add is that they all were approved and edited by Stalin personally. Some of them were added in his own handwriting to the draft text of the book.

What did Stalin consider essential to write into this book? Did he want to cool the ardor of the flatterers who were composing his *Short Biography*? No! He marked the very places where he thought that the praise of his services was insufficient. Here are some examples characterizing Stalin's activity, added in Stalin's own hand:

"In this fight against the skeptics and capitulators, the Trotskyites, Zinovievites, Bukharinites and Kamenevites, there was definitely welded together, after Lenin's death, that leading core of the Party... that upheld the great banner of Lenin, rallied the Party behind Lenin's behests, and brought the Soviet people onto the broad paths of industrializing the country and collectivizing the rural economy. The leader of this core and the guiding force of the Party and the state was comrade Stalin."

Thus writes Stalin himself! Then he adds:

"Although he performed his tasks as leader of the Party and the people with consummate skill, and enjoyed the unreserved support of the entire Soviet people, Stalin never allowed his work to be marred by the slightest hint of vanity, conceit or self-adulation."

Where and when could a leader so praise himself? Is this worthy of a leader of the Marxist-Leninist type? No. Precisely against this did Marx and Engels take such a strong position. This always was sharply condemned also by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.

In the draft text of [Stalin's] book appeared the following sentence: "Stalin is the Lenin of today." This sentence appeared to Stalin to be too weak. Thus, in his own handwriting, he changed it to read: "Stalin is the worthy continuer of Lenin's work, or, as it is said in our Party, Stalin is the Lenin of today." You see how well it is said, not by the nation but by Stalin himself.

It is possible to offer many such self-praising appraisals written into the draft text of that book in Stalin's hand. He showers himself especially generously with praises regarding his military genius and his talent for strategy. I will cite one more insertion made by Stalin on the theme: "The advanced Soviet science of war received further development," he writes, "at Comrade Stalin's hands. Comrade Stalin elaborated the theory of the permanent operating factors that decide the issue of wars, of active defense and the laws of counteroffensive and offensive, of the cooperation of all services and arms in modern warfare, of the role of big tank masses and air forces in modern war, and of the artillery as the most formidable of the armed services. At various stages of the war, Stalin's genius found correct solutions that took into account all the circumstances of the situation."

(Movement in the hall.)

Further, Stalin writes: "Stalin's military mastership was displayed both in defense and on offense. Comrade Stalin's genius enabled him to divine the enemy's plans

and defeat them. The battles in which comrade Stalin directed the Soviet armies are brilliant examples of operational military skill.”

This is how Stalin was praised as a strategist. Who did this? Stalin himself, not in his role as a strategist but in the role of an author-editor, one of the main creators of his [own] self-adulatory biography. Such, comrades, are the facts. Or should be said, rather, the shameful facts.

One additional fact from the same *Short Biography* of Stalin: As is known, the *History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Short Course* was written by a commission of the Party Central Committee.

This book, parenthetically, was also permeated with the cult of the individual and was written by a designated group of authors. This fact was reflected in the following formulation on the proof copy of the *Short Biography* of Stalin: “A commission of the Central Committee, All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), under the direction of comrade Stalin and with his most active personal participation, has prepared a *History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Short Course*.”

But even this phrase did not satisfy Stalin: The following sentence replaced it in the final version of the *Short Biography*: “In 1938, the book *History of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), Short Course* appeared, written by comrade Stalin and approved by a commission of the Central Committee, All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks).” Can one add anything more?

(Animation in the hall.)

As you see, a surprising metamorphosis changed the work created by a group into a book written by Stalin. It is not necessary to state how and why this metamorphosis took place.

A pertinent question comes to our mind: If Stalin is the author of this book, why did he need to praise the person of Stalin so much and to transform the whole post-October historical period of our glorious Communist Party solely into an action of “the Stalin genius”?

Did this book properly reflect the efforts of the Party in the socialist transformation of the country, in the construction of socialist society, in the industrialization and collectivization of the country, and also other steps taken by the Party which undeviatingly traveled the path outlined by Lenin? This book speaks principally about Stalin, about his speeches, about his reports. Everything without the smallest exception is tied to his name.

And when Stalin himself asserts that he himself wrote the *Short Course*, this calls at least for amazement. Can a Marxist-Leninist thus write about himself, praising his own person to the heavens?

Or let us take the matter of the Stalin Prizes.

(Movement in the hall.)

Not even the Tsars created prizes which they named after themselves.

Stalin recognized as the best a text of the national anthem of the Soviet Union which contains not a word about the Communist Party; it contains, however, the following unprecedented praise of Stalin: "Stalin brought us up in loyalty to the people. He inspired us to great toil and deeds."

In these lines of the anthem, the whole educational, directional and inspirational activity of the great Leninist Party is ascribed to Stalin. This is, of course, a clear deviation from Marxism-Leninism, a clear debasing and belittling of the role of the Party. We should add for your information that the Presidium of the Central Committee has already passed a resolution concerning the composition of a new text of the anthem which will reflect the role of the people and the role of the Party.

(Loud, prolonged applause.)

... [followed by details of acts of flattery and adulation, huge statues of Stalin, et cetera]

From: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm>

The History of the CPSU, Short Course, is here:

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/x01/index.htm>

Course: Philosophy and Religion

18081, Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1970, Chapter 1

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